# Primary School Children’s Evaluation and Preferences of Educational Environments

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Initially rooted in the human factors/ergonomics discipline, a human centered design approach entails incorporating the requirements, needs and experiences of diverse people into the design process and outcome. Children's perspectives of how satisfied they are with their physical environment in educational settings is particularly critical since they not only vary in their anthropometric data, but also capabilities and expectations during development. It is a question where educational environments are able meet the specific requirements of children.

Previously, layout and furniture of first grade classrooms of a primary school in Ankara were renovated through a design process where participation and input from the teachers and the school staff were paramount. Moreover, the required ergonomic measurements were based on anthropometric data of children. A year after completion, when the school requested the renovation of upper year classrooms of grades two-four, as well as a proposal for child-friendly playground equipment, the firm found this as an opportunity for research in two aspects. The first was to receive a post-occupancy evaluation of the recently designed first year classrooms. The second was to engage in a human centered design process through the exploration and incorporation of children's perspectives, needs and expectations into the design of upper grades and playground.

A mixed methods research was conducted with 170 students aged 7-10 in the primary school. The questionnaire included both open ended and closed ended questions. For the classrooms, the questions focused on students' comfort level and expectations regarding classroom layout and furniture. The questions regarding the exterior focused on how they spent their time outside in the garden, which currently had no playground equipment, and what features/equipment they would like to be designed there. Moreover, visual data was collected where children were asked to draw their ‘dream classroom' and 'dream playground'.

A preliminary analysis of the data reveals differences among preferences, satisfaction and expectations across different classroom layouts as well as ages. Moreover, the visual data show how children's imagination, developmental and social factors play an important role in their 'dream' environments.

The research is a significant contribution to our knowledge about primary school children’s actual lived and imaginary worlds as they relate to their classrooms and play environments in a specific case in Turkey. The data provides insight into educational environments from both physical and socio-cultural perspectives, as experienced by children themselves. Results are also intended to provide guidelines for application of ergonomic data and measurements required for specific children's needs.